

Volgograd: The Russian Response

The Foreign Ministry of Russia, Dec. 30: “This new strike, cynically planned for the eve of the New Year, is yet another attempt to open a domestic front, sow panic and chaos, incite ethnic strife and conflicts in Russian society.

“We shall not retreat, but continue our tough and consistent battle with a crafty enemy who knows no borders and can only be stopped by joint efforts. The criminal attacks in Volgograd, like the terrorist attacks in the USA, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and other countries are organized on the same model and inspired from the same quarters.”

The statement then criticizes politicians and ana-

lysts who try to divide terrorists into “good” and “wrong” ones, depending on which geopolitical goals they pursue, saying that this is a dangerous line, “in the context of the continuous, openly provocative calls from guerrilla leaders like Doku Umarov to unite forces under the flag of jihad and recruit new fighters for the terrorist war.”

This approach has boomeranged in the past, with tragic consequences. “Terrorism is always a crime, for which punishment must be mandatory. Today, as never before, unified condemnation of terrorism is needed, along with genuine international solidarity against it and the ideology of violence and extremism that fosters it.”

Journalist Kirill Benediktov, Dec. 29: Benediktov, a columnist for *Izvestia*, and editorial board member at Terra America, writing in *Izvestia*, presented the case for decisive moves to end Saudi Arabia’s nurturing of terrorism abroad, as well as for harsh measures within Russia.

Benediktov zeroed in on the two trips to Russia by Saudi intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan in recent months, in the wake of which came British and Arabic press leaks describing his purpose as extortion. Those reports claimed that Bandar had pressured the Russian leadership to compromise on Syria: in exchange for the Kremlin’s withdrawing support for Assad, the prince was allegedly offering guarantees for the protection of the Sochi Olympics against acts of terror. While those reports remain unconfirmed, said Benediktov, “there is no doubt that the Salafite regimes of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, have supported Wahhabite terrorism.”

He suggested that Russia could work together with the United States and with Iran, to weaken the influence of the Salafites throughout Southwest Asia. “Hostile actions against Russia by countries like the Gulf monarchies,” he said, “even if veiled in cryptopolitical form, should receive an adequate response. Russia is now strong enough to be able to take unfriendly action vis-à-vis regimes that for many years have exploited a Wahhabite fifth column to destabilize our country.”

The new attacks indicate “the high probability that a powerful Wahhabite underground has come into existence in recent years. Therefore a number of extremely harsh measures should be taken in the immediate future, to identify this underground, and these measures must involve the legitimate leaders of the Muslim community.”

Benediktov is an expert on space exploration, and spoke at the April 2013 Frankfurt conference of the Schiller Institute (see *EIR*, April 26, 2013).

• **Journalist Maxim Shevchenko, Dec. 30:** In a column for *Zavtra*, Shevchenko wrote that the worst short-term outcome for Russia would be a surge in calls from radical nationalists and liberals alike, to let the Caucasus go. The government should counter this tendency, Shevchenko wrote, with a clear and firm position of consolidating all anti-terror civic forces, both secular and religious, and excluding from the media any outbursts of Islamophobia or Caucasusophobia which only breed extremism.

On the geopolitical level, Shevchenko wrote that Russia’s ties with key Eurasian nations are targeted by the attacks: The Volga River is Russia’s main transport artery with Iran, and for the Moscow-Beijing-Tehran triangle. He warned against the creation of a hotbed of terrorism on the Volga transport artery and an active Wahhabite (therefore anti-Shi’a/anti-Iranian) underground there.

Shevchenko also pointed out that in Syria the Wahhabite anti-Shi’a factor was deliberately pumped up by Saudi Arabia, along with Israeli and certain U.S. circles.